

almost five months by rileyhart

Series: [stranger things two point five](#) [3]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, Gen, and lucas just want to help max, basically billy is a shitbag and so is his dad, domestic violence/child abuse

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Lucas Sinclair, Max (Stranger Things)

Relationships: Billy Hargrove & Max, Max/Lucas Sinclair

Status: Completed

Published: 2017-11-05

Updated: 2017-11-05

Packaged: 2022-04-02 14:37:19

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 3,331

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

It's been almost five months before he tries anything again, which really, is pretty good if Max thinks about it. Five months of him not calling her a little shit or whore; five months of him not grabbing her arm so hard that he leaves bruises where his fingers were; five months of him not slamming her into walls when their parents aren't home.

Almost five months since Billy was beating Steve to a pulp in Will's living room; almost five months since Max slammed the needle into his neck; since she yelled at him and brought the bat down close enough to make him obey.

And he had obeyed, for almost five months. For almost five months he'd left her alone.

almost five months

Author's Note:

this is a rather bleak depiction of max's home life, and after the end of the second season, i think there's only so long billy would remain afraid of max, so this fic is basically about that, and contains depictions of child abuse.

anyways i love max a lot and just want her to be happy and she deserves.

pleas tell me what you think in comments and leave kudos :)

more stranger things fics are to come, and hopefully less depressing ones.

It's been almost five months before he tries anything again, which really, is pretty good if Max thinks about it. Five months of him not calling her a little shit or whore; five months of him not grabbing her arm so hard that he leaves bruises where his fingers were; five months of him not slamming her into walls when their parents aren't home (or really his shitbag dad and her mom, who Max still doesn't know how she willingly married into such a family).

Almost five months since Billy was beating Steve to a pulp in Will's living room; almost five months since Max slammed the needle into his neck; since she yelled at him and brought the bat down close enough to make him obey.

And he had obeyed, for almost five months. For almost five months he'd left her alone.

Until she broke her mom's vase that Sunday afternoon. Her mom's vase that Billy's dad (the shitbag) had given her on their first anniversary.

It was an accident. She didn't mean too. Her mom and step-dad weren't home, and Billy was out (though he was supposedly babysitting her according to their parents); she'd just been skating down the upstairs hallway — it was raining outside — and she just

bumped into the table and it had fell, and smashed into a million beautiful pieces.

Max quickly swept up all the pieces and the flowers and through them into the bin outside, thinking it would probably be awhile till her mom noticed anything, by which time she would've come up with some heroic story that involved saving a kitten, and nothing about skateboarding indoors (which she definitely wasn't allowed to do).

One unfortunate issue with this otherwise brilliant plan? Tomorrow was trash day.

Billy (the shitbag's son, aka shitbag 2.0) got home only minutes before their parents; Max was sitting on the couch watching TV.

"If they ask, make sure you tell 'em I was babysitting you, got it?" he said, dropping his cigarette butt, and squishing it out on the carpet; Max ignored him.

Their parents were home not long after, and Billy's dad, Neil, asked Max if they'd gotten along, and Max nodded, her eyes still on the TV.

That night, after dinner, Neil took the trash out, and Max, watching TV again, heard a cry of exclamation come from outside, and she froze, realising he'd found the remains of the vase in the bin.

He came immediately storming in, and Max sat absolutely frozen on the couch, eyes still on the TV.

"BILLY!" Neil yelled up the stairs. "Billy get your good-for-nothing ass down here at once!"

Max's mom, Susan, was washing the dishes and looked up with alarm. "Neil? Neil, what is it?"

"He's gone and broken the vase I got you," Neil told her, "the little shit!"

Shit, Max thought, not daring to tear her eyes away from the TV, *shit*, *shit*, *shit*.

“Oh, Neil, it’s okay you don’t need to—” Susan protested, but Neil cut her off.

“No, it’s not fucking okay!” he yelled at her. ‘We’ve been married for almost five fucking years, and it’s about time my shitbag of a son realised that!’

At that moment Billy appeared at the end of the stairs. “It’s about time your shitbag of a son realised what, Father?” he asked, his voice coated in sarcasm.

Neil turned around, and punched Billy square in the face.

Billy fell, Susan gasped, and even Max turned her head at the sound of bone hitting bone.

Billy wiped the blood of his mouth, and stood up shakily. “The fuck I do?!”

Neil shoved Billy, not hard but hard enough to make an already disoriented Billy to trip up the stairs and fall backwards.

“Susan’s vase!” Neil spat venomously, and Max quite literally saw fat drops of hateful saliva fly at Billy.

“Neil, really you don’t have to—” Susan protested weakly again, but Neil shut her up with one wave of his hand.

Max hadn’t felt sorry for Billy since the first time she saw Neil hit him — back when they lived in California. Max had only been nine, and Billy only thirteen; she can’t even remember what Billy had done now, but Neil had smacked a pre-pubescent Billy so hard he’d fallen over. It had been the first and only time Max, who’d been watching through the banisters of the stairs, had seen her shitbag of a step-brother cry. She’d seen him be hit and shoved by Neil since, but that had been after Billy had decided that Max made a good punching bag, and it was hard to feel sorry for someone who had slammed your fingers in his car door on purpose on more than one occasion.

But the complete confusion in Billy’s eyes as to *why* he was being treated this way at that moment, is enough to make Max feel sorry for him.

“What about it?!” Billy asked, screaming madly at his father, saliva and blood dripping from his mouth.

Neil grabbed him by the shirt collar, lifting him up, so that their faces were only millimetres from each other.

“You broke Susan’s vase, you shitbag faggot, don’t play dumb with me,” he whispered, and the poison from his voice sent a shiver of fear through Max.

“Neil, really!” her mother again.

“Shut up, Susan!” he yelled, this time turning to face, and Susan jumped back in fright.

“I—” Billy opened his mouth to protest, but then understanding flashed in his eyes, and he shut his mouth, and Max, who’d been watching the whole thing unfold since Neil had punched Billy, turned quickly back to the TV, her heart thumping in her chest, and her mouth dry with fear.

Neil dropped Billy, who thudded quietly on the stairs. “Yeah,” he said to his suddenly silent son, “that’s what I thought.”

No response, and Max wished the TV was louder, but she dare not move to turn it up.

“Say sorry to Susan, and tell her you’ll buy a replacement,” Neil instructed Billy.

“Sorry Susan, I’ll buy a replacement with my own money,” Billy said in a monotone.

“With your own money,” Neil added.

“With my own money,”

“Th—Thank you, Billy,” Max’s mother stuttered.

Billy grimaced, blood smeared on his teeth. “My pleasure, Susan.”

And Max could feel his eyes staring straight at her, and the hair on

the back of her neck stood up; her whole body was absolutely frozen in fear.

She listened as Billy walked slowly up the stairs, and she knew he was walking that slow and that loud deliberately, just to freak her out.

It was working.

At the sound of Billy's door closing upstairs, Max let out a whimper, and tears filled her eyes. She bit the inside of her mouth to stop herself from crying out any louder, and wiped her eyes quickly before her mom or Neil could notice.

It's been almost five months since he's tried anything, but Max knows that's all about to come to an end.

That whole week Max leaves for school early in the morning, she's out of the door before Billy was out of bed; she goes to a friend's house everyday after school, anything to avoid being alone with Billy.

Thursday evening she's not so lucky.

It's already dark as Max skates home from Dustin's; she knows she'll be in trouble with her mom for being home late, but it's better than being home alone with Billy after school.

Neil and Susan are outside, getting into the car, as Max comes up the driveway.

"Where are you guys going?" Max asks, hopping off her skateboard and picking it up.

"Max!" her mother exclaims, walking quickly up to her. "What have I told you about being home after dark?!"

Max ignores her. "Where are you guys going?!" she asks pressingly, fear creeping in her voice.

"Out for a business dinner," Susan replies, confused, "you know this

sweetie, we told you last week remember?”

She remembers now, her mom mentioning a dinner with some of shitbag Neil’s clients, in her terror of the past four days she’d completely forgotten.

“Right! Of course!” she’s panicking now. “I was gonna ask if I could stay over at Dustin’s tonight? That’s okay, right?”

“Susan we’ve got to go.” Neil calls, who’s already sitting in the car.

“Coming, honey!” Susan replies to him, before turning back to Max. “What have I said about staying over at boys’ houses?”

“Mom, please!”

“Susan!” Neil calls again.

“Maxine—”

“It’s Max, Mom!” Max snaps at her.

“Maxine,” her mother emphasises, “go inside, your brother’s making dinner.”

“*Step*-brother,” Max mutters.

Susan glares at her. “Inside, now!” she tells her firmly. “Or you’ll be grounded for two weeks.”

Max considers running, just skating away, and her mother must see this, because she snatches Max’s skateboard out of her hands.

“*Mom!*” Max exclaims, as Susan puts it into the trunk of the car.

“Maxine, I don’t know what’s gotten into you, but no skateboard until you snap out of it.”

Max gapes at her mother.

“Inside, *now!*” Susan tells her again, and Max walks, defeated, into the house, her mother watching her with her arms folded.

Max shuts the door and hears the car drive away; as quick as she can she sprints up the stairs, into her bedroom, and locks her door.

“Oh, Max-eeeeeen,” Billy calls in a singsong voice from downstairs, and Max’s blood runs cold. She hastily begins to push her heavy chest of draws towards her door.

“Max-eeeeeen,” she can hear him walking up the stairs, and her heart thumps desperately in her chest, and she tries to push harder.

“Max-eeeeeeen,” he’s closer, and in a panic she abandons the draws and rushes to her window, and tries to open it.

It’s locked.

She tries again.

It’s *never* locked.

He planned this, he planned this, he planned this.

Her mind races with panic as she tries hopelessly to open it.

The doorknob turns and rattles, and Max spins towards the door, sinking down the wall and onto her bed.

“Open the door, Max!” Billy yells from the other side.

“Leave— Leave me, alone!” Max stutters, not sounding half as brave as she’d like.

God, what she wouldn’t give to have that needle and Steve’s bat again.

“Open the motherfucking door right now, you little whore!” Billy screams, the whole door shaking.

“Go away!” Max screams back, tears in her eyes.

There’s silence, and for a moment Max thinks he’s really gone, that he thinks she has another bat or needle in her room, but then she hears the ‘click’ of a door being unlocked, and Billy comes bursting

into her room.

Max scrambles to the window, and tries to break it with her fists, but Billy is pulling her back with her hair, and there's nothing but pillows in her arms reach.

He has a whole fistful of her hair and tugs her back hard enough to make her fall off her bed, landing on her back.

Billy steps domineeringly over her, as Max sobs, covering her face with her hands. He pries them away from her, and leans down, gripping her left arm so hard that she knows the bruises she was once so familiar with will return.

"Why are you crying, Maxie?" he asks her villainously.

"Billy, please," she cries, "I'm sorry, I didn't know he'd blame you, I'm sorry,"

His grip still firm on her arm, he shakes her, and she lets out a sob. "You're what?" he yells.

"Sorry! I'm sorry!"

He lets go of her arm, standing back up, and Max breathes out in relief. "Sorry?" he questions sarcastically. "So saying sorry suddenly makes it all okay?"

Max doesn't reply, not daring to speak.

Without warning, Billy leans down again and smacks her across the face. Max cries out in pain, her sobs raw.

"I'm... sorry," Billy says into her ear, "does that make it better?"

Max shakes her head, trying to do her best to hold back her tears.

"Didn't think so," he says with disgust, and he hovers over her, his mouth open and big blob of spit forming. Max keeps her eyes tight shut as it falls onto her face; she bites the inside of her cheek to stop herself from letting out anymore sobs, but she can feel her whole body practically convulsing with them anyway.

Billy grabs her left forearm again, his fingers pressing into her skin. "And what was that thing you told me to do at your little friend's house?" he asks her in the same venomous tone as before.

Max shakes her head, her eyes still tight shut.

"Look at me!" he screams at her, shaking her arm, and Max's eyes fly open in alarm. "What. Was. That. Thing. You. Said."

"Understand," she finally whimpers.

"Well, bitch, understand that I don't give a shit what you say about leaving you or your little friends alone, and that I'm the one in charge, okay?"

Max nods, desperate for him to leave her alone.

He smiles, an evil, self-satisfied smile, and lets go of Max's arm. He steps away from her and walks over to her chest of draws, picking up the piggy bank and throwing it at the ground.

It shatters, and Max winces as pieces of china fly in all directions. She watches as picks up all the coins and notes, and stuffs them into his pockets. He leaves the room without so much as another word, slamming the door behind him.

Max lets out a sob, and another, and another. She brings her knees her up to chest, and lies on the floor in the fetal position, crying for what feels like forever.

When her parents come home, she's cleaned up the broken china and put her chest of draws back against the wall. She's lying in her bed, pretending to be asleep, as her mother pushes her door open quietly to check on her. Max holds her breath until her mother leaves, and cries herself to sleep that night.

She'd always preferred long sleeve t-shirts, and the next morning is no different. The bruises of Billy's fingers are imprinted on her arm again, so she pulls a red long sleeve t-shirt over her head and the bruises are gone.

When she goes downstairs for breakfast Billy is already in the kitchen, sitting on the bench eating cereal, milk running down his cheeks.

Max feels him watching her as she reaches for the cereal packet.

It's empty.

"What a shame," Billy comments sarcastically, sliding off the bench, and placing his bowl, still full with milk and cereal, in the water filled sink. "Come on," he says to her, reaching out to ruffle her hair, but Max flinches back automatically, "let's go, otherwise you'll be late for school."

"I'm skating to school." Max tells him angrily, getting the bread out of the fridge.

"I thought Susan still had your skateboard,"

Max stops in her tracks and swears under her breath, and Billy grins. He's won. Again.

Max gulps. "Fine. I'm coming."

The long sleeve t-shirt does the trick that day at school — no one sees her bruises, though Lucas does ask why she's so hungry at recess, but Max shrugs it off as not having enough time for breakfast, which is technically true, she tells herself.

But it's Lucas who sees the bruises on Sunday afternoon, and this time he doesn't believe her excuse.

They're at the Hawkins skatepark — Max has been teaching Lucas to skate the past couple of months, and he's actually being making some progress.

Without really thinking, Max's pushes her sleeves up, clapping Lucas who managed to go down a ramp without falling.

"I did it! I did it!" he exclaims happily, picking up the skateboard and running over to Max.

“You did it, Stalker!” she beams, hugging him.

“Whoa,” Lucas says, frowning, extracting himself from the hug, and grabbing her arm softly; Max’s heart sinks.

“What happened?” he asks concernedly.

“Nothing,” Max says hastily without looking him in the eye; pulling her arm away and pushing the sleeve down. “I just— just fell on my skateboard, that’s all.” She skates over to the ramps before he can reply.

“Max! Max!” he runs after her, and she narrowly avoids a collision with him.

“Max, can we just—” he pauses to jump out of her way “—talk?”

“There’s nothing to talk about, Stalker.” Max says firmly, still skating.

“He did this to you, didn’t he?” Lucas asks her, and that stops her dead, hopping off her skateboard.

“I said I didn’t want to talk about it, Lucas,” she tells him her voice breaking.

Lucas steps closer to her. “I thought you said he stopped after what happened at Will’s?”

Max sighs, looking at him, and takes him by the hand, leading him off the skatepark. They walk away from it in silence, until Max finds a slightly more secluded spot behind a tree. “He did stop,” she tells him quietly, as she slides down the trunk of the tree, and Lucas does the same, sitting next to her. “He stopped, but I... I broke this vase that his dad brought my mom, and his dad found out and just went...” she shakes her head in an attempt to stop the tears in her eyes, “it was bad, he blamed Billy, and Billy... he knew it must’ve been me, but he knew his dad would never believe him, so he waited till we were alone and, well...” she gulps and shrugs, not daring to look up at Lucas, and instead playing with the thread of her sleeve.

“That’s awful, Max,” Lucas murmurs, and he reaches out for her shoulder and squeezes it comfortingly.

Max looks up at him, her eyes filled with tears and smiles. "It's okay, really," she laughs sadly, "I'm okay."

"We... we should tell someone," Lucas says, and something flashes in Max's eyes, and he knows immediately that he's said the wrong thing.

"No," she shakes her head firmly, "we're not telling anyone, okay?"

"If your mom knew, she could tell Billy's dad and..."

"And Neil would beat him up and then Billy would beat me up in revenge." Max finishes angrily for him.

"Okay, well... Steve? Steve would beat him up for you,"

"Do you remember what happened last time Billy and Steve fought? It didn't end well for Steve."

"What about El?" Lucas suggests, and his eyes sparkle as if he's thought of the perfect solution. "We could tell her next time we get to see her, and she'd be able to break Billy's arm by just a flick of her head, Max, she's done it before!"

"No, no, and no!" Max snaps, shaking her head. "I can't tell anyone, Lucas, okay?! No one can know, 'cause the second they know, the second Billy will come after them as well!"

"But El—"

"I don't care that she has powers, Lucas!" Max yells, standing up and pacing angrily. "I don't care! You're not telling anyone, okay?! Because I don't want to put anyone else in... danger," her voice breaks on the last word, and the tears return. "Okay?!"

Lucas nods. "Okay."

Max slumps back down next to him. "Thank you."

"I just wanna help you," Lucas explains, "that's all,"

Max smiles at him. "I know, I know you do, but... no one can," she says sadly, before adding in a more positive tone, "but he'll be off to

college soon and I know visits home will be rare and far between — he hates it here.”

“I guess that’s good,” Lucas says quietly, “and... if... until then, y’know, you ever need a place to crash, you can, um, y’know...” he stumbles over his words, and Max smiles softly and finishes the sentence for him.

“Stay at yours?”

He nods. “Yeah, whenever you want.”

Max moves closer to him and rests her head on his shoulder. “Thanks, Stalker.”

“Anytime, Madmax.”